

San Marino

Liberty-Loving People of a Tiny Republic

By Melvill Allan Jamieson, F.R.G.S.

Consul-General for the Republic of San Marino in London

IN the early years of the fourth century, during the persecution of the Christians under the Roman Emperors Diocletian and Maximian, a poor stone-cutter and convert from Dalmatia, named Marinus, sought refuge upon Mount Titano. There, in the remote solitude of its summit, he founded a Christian hermitage. A pathway to this almost inaccessible rock was soon dug out by the footsteps of pilgrims attracted by the preachings of the humble workman of Rimini.

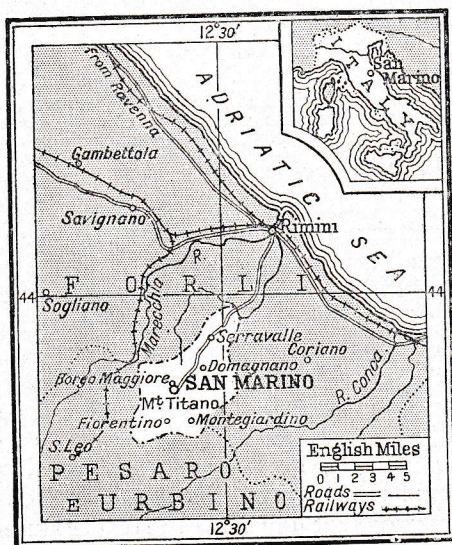
Mount Titano was at that time the property of a Roman matron named Felicissima (or Felicity), whose two sons, serving in the Imperial Guard, were naturally opposed to the new religion. While visiting their mother they undertook, under a burning sun, the abrupt ascent of the mountain in order to hurl abuse at the hermit. On descending from the chilly peak to the warm valley they were attacked by fever, and their mother, alarmed at the rapid spread of the disease, begged the preacher to come and restore them to health.

Moved by the earnest words of prayer uttered by Marinus, both mother and sons were converted to the new faith, and in token of gratitude, Felicissima made an absolute gift to him of the mountain upon the summit of which was soon

erected a cross bearing as its only inscription the word "Libertas." This phrase has remained through all the intervening years the motto of the republic, of which Marinus may be regarded as the founder.

Another phrase, which has almost passed into a proverb in the little state, demonstrates that honesty and integrity were regarded as assets of the utmost importance by the Sammarinese at a very early date. Its origin arose in this way. A Venetian merchant, who was once owed a sum of money by a Sammarinese, repaired in person to the republic, and went straight to one of the Captains Regent of the time. He found this high official treading grapes in his vineyard. Much staggered at this sight, which offered so great a contrast to the grandeur and pomp of his own dignitaries, he half repented him of his journey, and the trouble he had taken; nevertheless, he approached the captain, and told his story.

This functionary thereupon left his employment, and sent for the delinquent, who acknowledged the debt without hesitation. Orders were immediately given for the selling of his house and worldly goods, whereupon the money was soon forthcoming, and the Venetian went home rejoicing and profound in his respect for the



THE REPUBLIC OF SAN MARINO

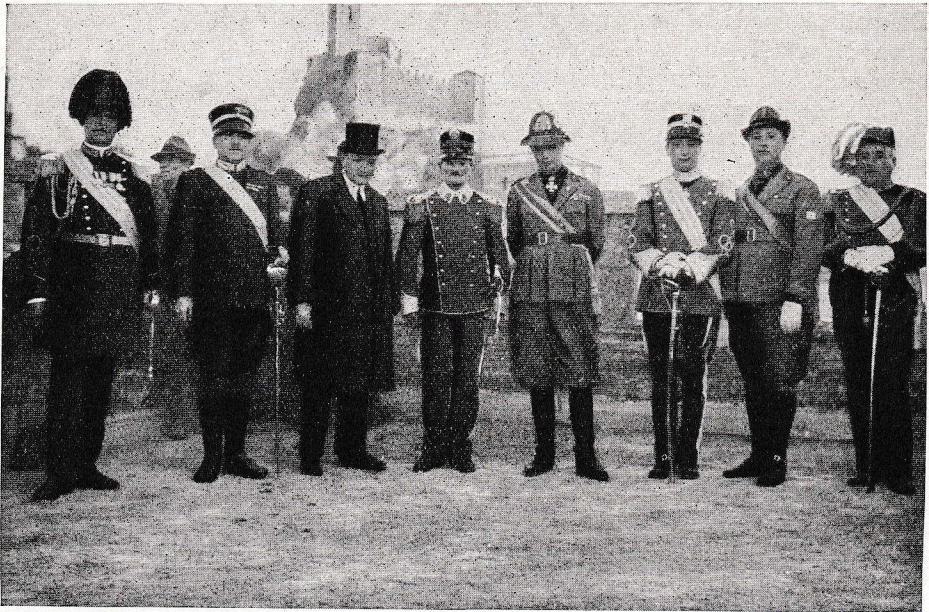
SAN MARINO & ITS PEOPLE

republic. Some time later the same creditor, having occasion to sue a debtor in the courts at Venice, and having there experienced the delays and uncertainties of the law, made use of the phrase to which I have referred: "A simple grape-treader of San Marino is worth more than ten Venetian magistrates."

Wars and rumours of wars were responsible for the division and subdivision of the Italian republics from

citizens the Father of his Country, replied that "the republic of San Marino, satisfied with its narrow boundaries and modest existence, had no desire of accepting his generous offer, nor of entertaining the ambitious idea of aggrandizement which might in time compromise its liberty."

The Republic comprises thirty-eight square miles, and the population is approximately 13,000, so there is little doubt that San Marino can establish its



OFFICIALS OF THE REPUBLIC AND AN ENVOY FROM ROME

San Marino provides gorgeous uniforms for her officials, some of whom, officers of militia and the gendarmerie, are gathered on the roof of the government palace in honour of a visit from Rome of General Guiseppe Bottai, a senator of the Mussolini regime. Behind the group are the battlements of La Rocca that frown from the summit of Mount Titano

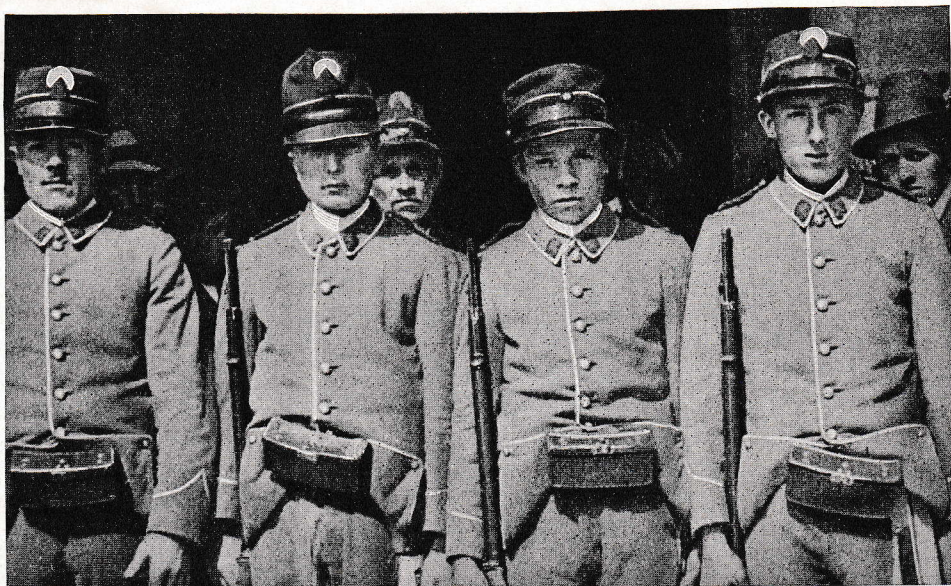
the earliest times, but, throughout all these vicissitudes, San Marino remained true to its primary tradition of independence, and its flag of Liberty floated proudly from the battlements at the summit of Mount Titano, 2,650 feet high.

It is on record that on several occasions San Marino was offered an increase in territory, but wisely its councillors refused. In 1797, for example, Bonaparte proposed to extend the frontiers, but the Captain Regent of that time, Antonio Onofri, surnamed by his fellow-

claim to be the oldest and smallest independent state in the world.

The Sammarinese are a healthy, diligent, and extremely courteous race, and their surroundings are exceedingly beautiful. The view from Mount Titano is superb. Eastwards is the Adriatic, to the north lie the pinewoods of Ravenna, while to the south and west are the mountainous districts bordered by the Apennines.

The temperature varies between eighty and twenty degrees Fahrenheit, though



INFANTRY FROM THE ARMY OF THE WORLD'S SMALLEST NATION

All able-bodied citizens must join the ranks of the militia, only those engaged in either receiving or imparting education being exempt from military service. It is, happily, not likely that the army of San Marino will ever be needed to defend the diminutive state, though its steep cliffs have been sternly assailed more than once since they first supported a fortalice



GENTLEMEN OF THE NOBLE GUARD WHO ESCORT THE CHIEFS OF STATE

The Noble Guard was instituted on January 15, 1741, to act as escort to the Captains Regent, for special religious ceremonies, and to guard the persons of the Councillors during sessions. Such companies were raised from time to time in former days, notably in France, among them being the famous musketeers of Louis XIII. immortalised by Dumas



WHERE COOL WATER FLOWS FROM LIBERTY'S PEDESTAL

Whereas many pieces of public statuary lose their significance with the passing of time, that which surmounts the Piazza del Pianello has a practical as well as symbolic import to passers-by since the benefits of Liberty are always ready to flow at their bidding. Behind is the Government Palace, where the Council meets, and from both square and tower wide vistas stretch to Apennine and Adriatic



PAST AND PRESENT CAPTAINS REGENT AT THE BI-ANNUAL INSTALLATION

On the steps of the cathedral the townsfolk are massed to witness the installing of the two new Captains Regent. The retiring pair can be seen walking together between their successors, to whom they are about to hand over the insignia of the order of San Marino. On either side wave the plumes and flash the sabres of two files of the Noble Guard

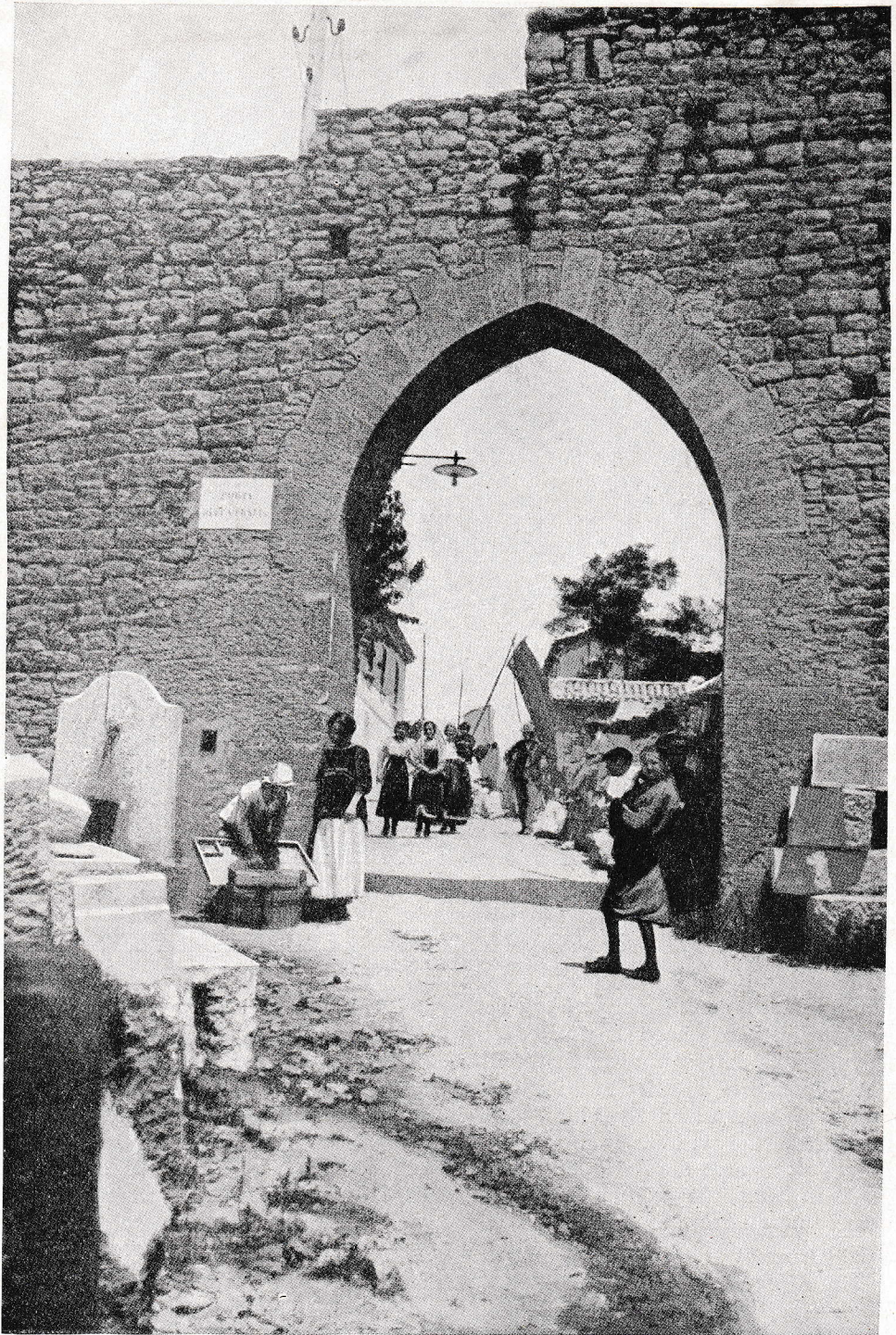
naturally it is considerably colder on the mountain, where snow is usual during the greater part of the winter months. The climate is healthy in all seasons, and in summer a delicious breeze refreshes the visitor from the low-lying towns near the Adriatic.

Soon after the frontier is reached, where no passport or other unpleasant formalities are imposed, one arrives at the town of Serravalle, and later at the Borgo, nestled at the base of Mount Titano. A steep ascent brings one to the old Porta Franciscana, the principal gate of the capital, the city of San Marino. No vehicles enter, owing to the narrowness of the winding streets,

and the houses rise in tiers towards the summit of the mountain.

A walk along the crest of the hill affords one a wonderful panorama and a close view of the three towers, which are the outstanding feature of the coat-of-arms of the Republic, and from each of which rises a bronze feather visible from a considerable distance.

The cathedral was erected in 1855 on the site of what was one of the oldest Christian buildings in Italy, dating from 1126, and originally dedicated to S. Peter. The relics of the patron saint are preserved here in great veneration, and are displayed to the people at the annual fête of S. Marinus on



WHERE THE ROAD RUNS THROUGH THE CITY WALL TO THE QUARRIES

In the days when the walls were raised and any road might bring an enemy, gateways were built narrow in San Marino. The blocks of rough-hewn stone piled about the side of the way indicate that this is the road to the quarries, and there is some fragment of Mount Titano in many an Italian house. To one side a towns woman does her washing at a scrubbing board



STONE-CUTTERS AT THE QUARRIES OF MOUNT TITANO

S. Marinus made his home upon this mountain and, so the legend runs, was a stone-cutter. His trade is still followed upon the same site and provides one of the main articles of export. The crown of stones circling the summit encloses the city, which takes its name from the lonely anchorite whose chisel-strokes echoed among the rocks so long ago

SAN MARINO & ITS PEOPLE



CAPTAINS REGENT OF THE REPUBLIC

From the Great Council, two members are selected twice yearly to act as Captains Regent; they assume office on April 1 and October 1, and don curious uniforms for the occasion, survivals, like the state itself, of medievalism

September 3, when a service is held attended by the Captains Regent, the officers of state, the militia, and the mass of the population. In the museum are to be seen several souvenirs associated with Garibaldi, who took refuge in San Marino on July 30, 1849, when forced to retreat from the Austrian Army.

A well-furnished theatre, accommodating about five hundred, affords periodical entertainments, and is extensively patronised by this joy-loving and cheerful if hard-working people.

The form of government is a relic of medieval times, and is in the hands of a Council, Grand and General, of

sixty members formed of equal representatives elected from the ranks of patricians, citizens, and countrymen. Two Captains Regent preside, and are chosen from the members of the Grand Council bi-annually, assuming office on April 1 and October 1, with all the quaint ceremonies observed for several centuries.

No Captain Regent can be re-elected until three years have elapsed. Secretaries of State for foreign and internal affairs have charge of these government departments. The Republic has consuls-general in London, Paris, Rome, Brussels, and Stockholm, as well as consuls in various other countries. A treaty of friendship and commerce, signed in 1862, and renewed in 1897, between San Marino and the kingdom of Italy proclaimed the absolute independence of the Republic, and treaties of extradition have since been concluded

between the state and Great Britain, Netherlands, Belgium, and the United States of America.

San Marino is an example of the aristocracy and people sharing the reins of government, with results that have been and still are entirely satisfactory to those concerned, and it is a notable fact that of all the constitutions that flourished in the Middle Ages, such as Florence and Venice, only the Republic of San Marino remains as an example of those independencies that have passed away and are now part of the kingdom of Italy. The judicial organization is presided over by

SAN MARINO

Its Towers, Town & People



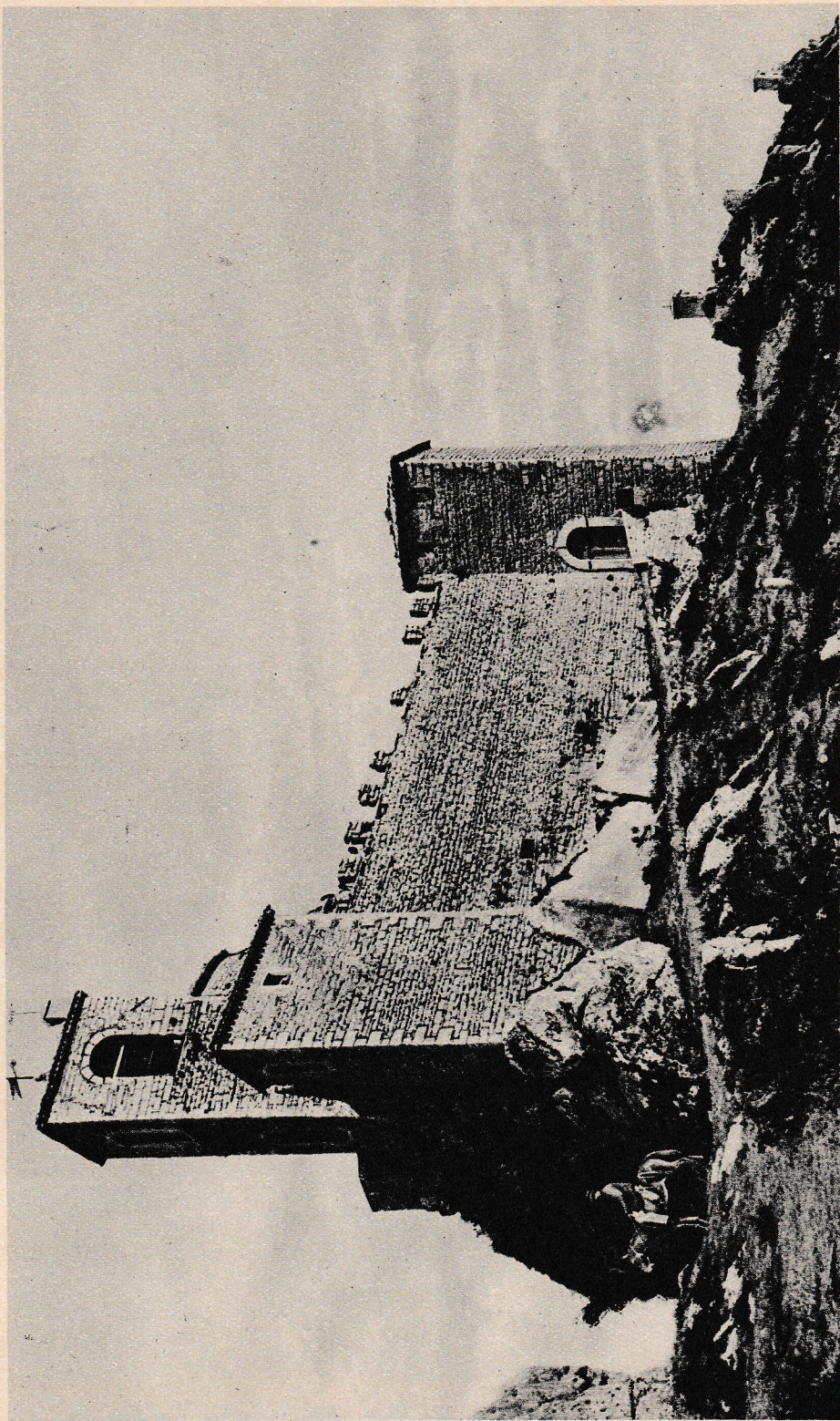
As if hewn from the crest of this unscaleable cliff stands the castle of La Rocca. Far beneath, the roads wind like ribbons over the border

Photo, Donald McLeish

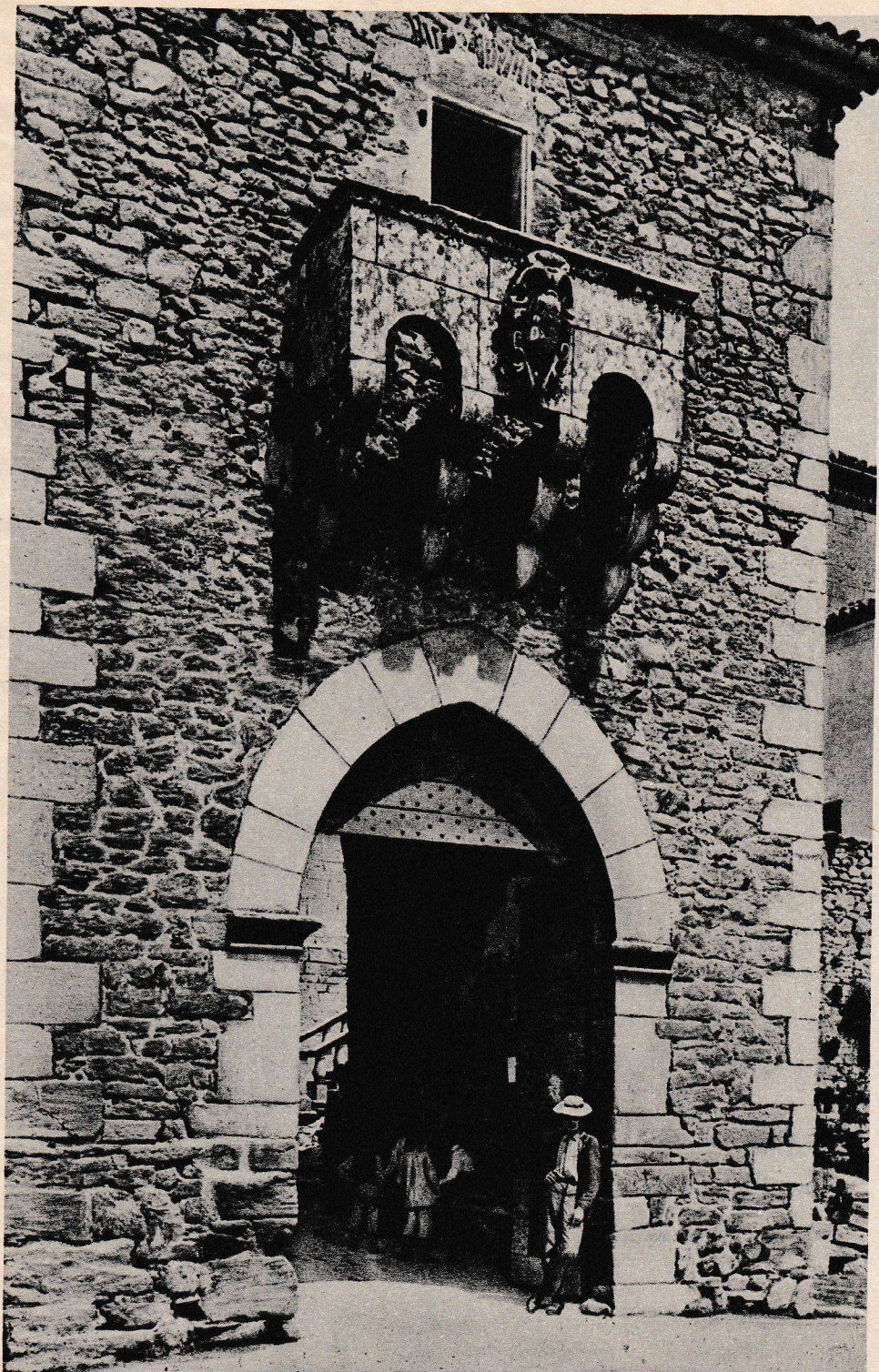


From the field of the day's work the white kine are driven slowly to the byre. Wherever the peasant goes in his small country, the sudden cliffs of Mount Titano are always near at hand, dominating and splendid

Photo, Canon J. T. Parfit



Three towers crown the triple crests of Mount Tilano. The first forms part of this castle of La Rocca, now a prison, while the others to the right stand alone. The three are displayed upon the state coat-of-arms

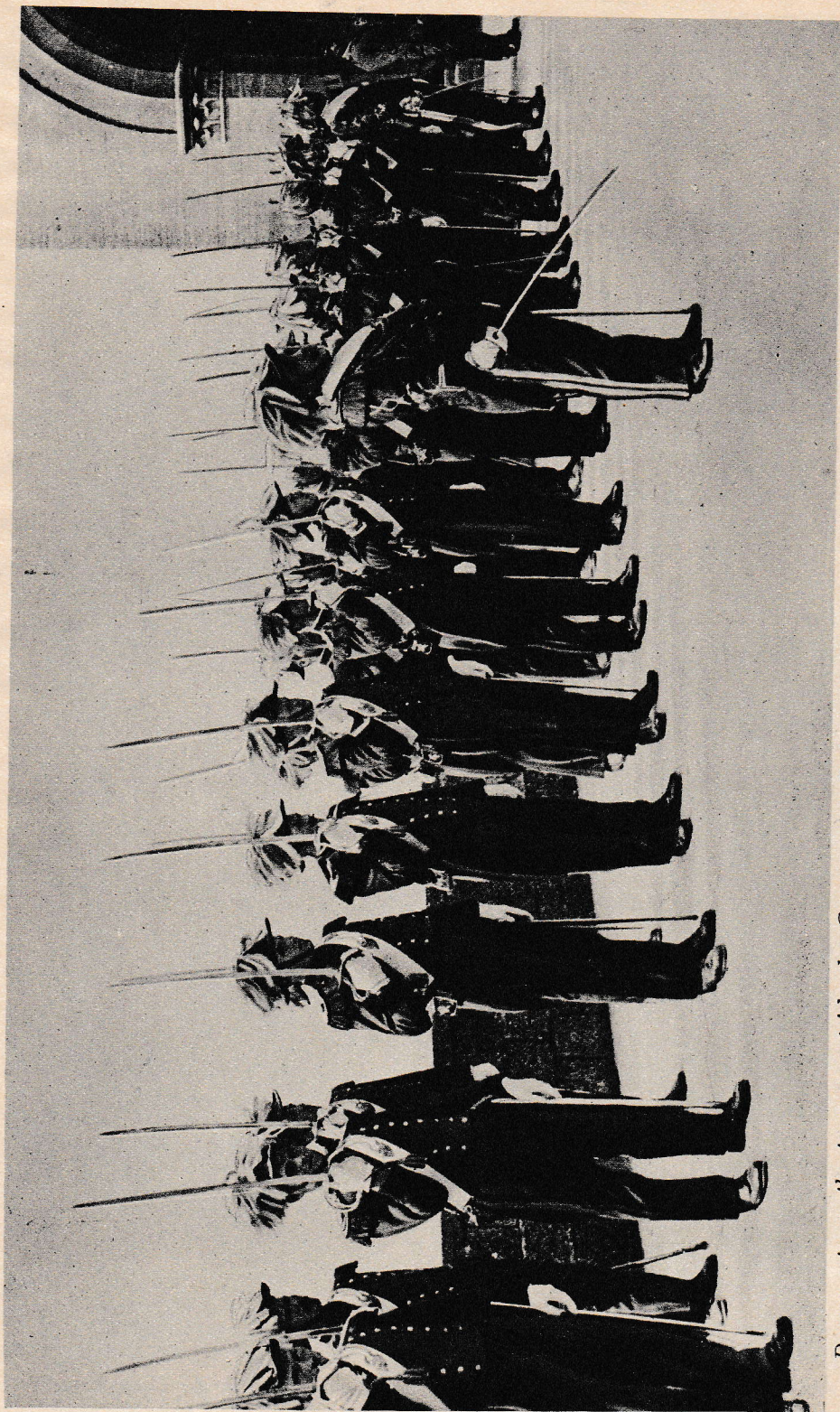


At the end of a long climb in the heat, the traveller reaches the shadowed archway of the Porta Franciscana, the city's main gate



On passing through the gate, just wide enough for an occasional ox-cart, the three towers of the coat-of-arms can be seen over the arch

Photo, Donald McLeish



Drawn up on the terrace outside the Government Palace, the Noble Guard, containing in their ranks some who are entitled to coat-armour and a coronet, make a brave show, their blades all flashing in the sun



San Marino readily took to the black shirts of Fascism. A detachment headed by the azure and white of the Republic's banner are giving the ancient Roman salute in front of the Government Palace



*Military and civil authority in imposing uniform are here represented :
the officer commanding the militia and, standing by him, a gendarme*

Photo, Donald McLeish

SAN MARINO & ITS PEOPLE

magistrates of foreign nationality (Italian) in order to obviate the influence of personal relations which exist in a small state. The largest of the three towers on Mount Titano, La Rocca, serves as a prison, though crime is happily infrequent. Capital punishment was abolished in 1859.

The defensive army or militia is composed of all able-bodied citizens between the ages of sixteen and fifty-five, with the exception of professors and students, and numbers somewhat under two thousand of all ranks. As soon as Italy entered the Great War many Sammarinese offered their services, and served in the ranks of the Italian Army, and of these several were decorated for conspicuous bravery. In addition, the people of San Marino equipped and supported two Red Cross hospitals, which rendered valuable services throughout the war, and General Diaz, Commander-in-Chief of the Italian troops, saw fit to record this fact in Italian Army Orders after the severe battles on the Piave front, where the San Marino hospitals were actively engaged.

The principal products of the soil are grain, wine, oil, and vegetables, while cattle-breeding is carried on successfully, an annual fair being held at the Borgo for the disposal of the livestock. All the stone of which the fine buildings are constructed is quarried out of the slopes of Mount Titano, and is of excellent quality, the Sammarinese stonemasons being worthy successors of the stone-cutter who founded their Republic sixteen centuries ago. Elementary schools and a finely-equipped

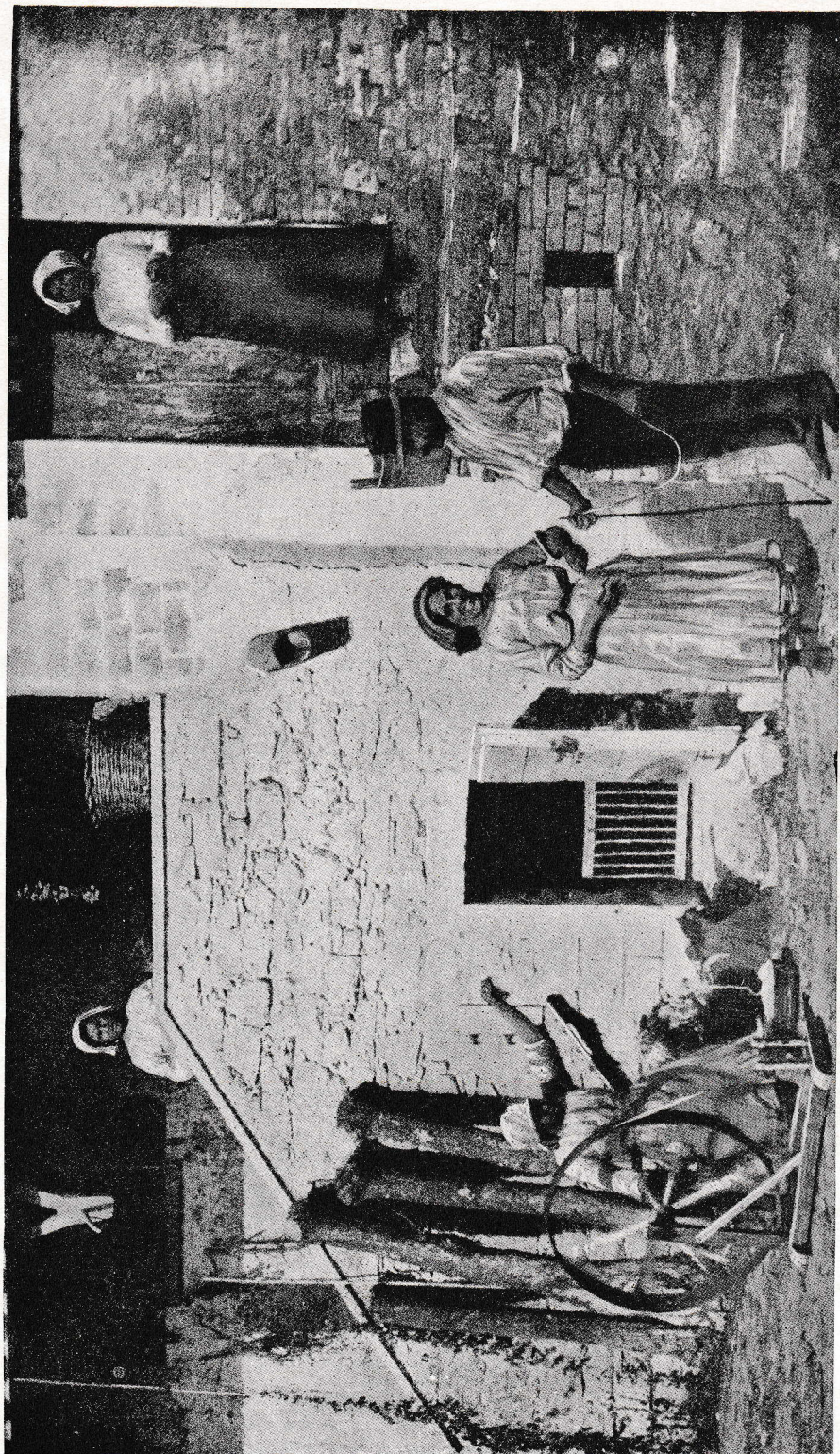
college, the diplomas from which are recognized by Italian universities, where the courses are identical with those of the kingdom of Italy, are well attended, the boys receiving instruction in mechanics, engineering, and allied trades calculated to prove useful as the groundwork of the occupations they will embrace at a later date.

The hospitals, dependent on government grants and the benefactions of private individuals, are thoroughly up to date, and there is a fine operating-theatre with a complete up-to-date equipment. A surgical dispensary provides such medicines as are required to out-patients daily at a nominal charge regulated according to the purse of the sufferer. All the doctors are Italians. The coat-of-arms of San Marino is



MILK IN THE MORNING EARLY

Before the long shadows of the after-dawn have lost their coolness, the peasant girls from the farms below have climbed Mount Titano with their milk bottles in straw baskets. Each day this fair invasion wakes San Marino



WITH THE PEASANTRY OF SAN MARINO: UNHURRIED OCCUPATIONS UNDER SOUTHERN SKIES

Set like an island in the midst of one of Europe's most vivacious and active peoples, the little state, little troubled, resists the importunate waves of hard activity. The visitor finds that time has more spare hours to give out of the hurried twenty-four. The people pursue their chief occupation of winning wine, oil, and garden produce from the earth, and in maintaining their excellent breed of cattle. Sometimes, a larger wave from the sea of international trouble may spray their land with excitement, but life here yet remains something of a pastoral in the pageant of nations



TABLET THAT HAS OUTLASTED THE ANCIENT LOCAL MEASUREMENTS IT RECORDS

Outside the post-office of the capital this old monument, worn with years, is displayed. It gives certain official measurements, now replaced by the metric system to conform with Italy, which date from the fifteenth century. The mail is brought to this post-office by motor from Rimini. The car is garaged outside the gate for, according to a by-law, no vehicle is supposed to enter the town, though it is on record that on the day when Mussolini's envoy arrived a lame man from a border town was allowed to ascend to the Pianello Square in a motor-car. The streets could only just contain it

Photo, Canon J. T. Farfit



STRAIT STEEP STREET IN SAN MARINO FILLED WITH FASCISTI

So steeply do the streets climb up the mountain they cover that traffic can get no farther than the town gate, and all who use them go on foot. As many houses as possible have been crammed within the circumference of the ramparts so that all thoroughfares are narrow and have no spare room when a procession like this, which welcomed visiting Fascisti, swarms down them

described as follows: A field of azure within a shield, three mountains in green, with towers in silver, the windows, battlements and outlines in black, on top of each a silver ostrich feather, and on either side entwined branches of laurel and oak with berries and acorns. On a white label is the word "Libertas" in blue letters. Over the shield is depicted a gold crown.

The republican flag is composed of two horizontal stripes of white and blue, with the coat-of-arms displayed in the centre.

Special copper coinage was minted for San Marino from 1864 to 1894, and silver in 1898 and 1899, but this has been discontinued, and the notes and coins of Italy are in general use.

The government of the Republic has, however, its own postage-stamps, bearing a view of Mount Titano and the

three towers. On more than one occasion tempting offers have been made by the promoters of gambling casinos, but so far the powers that be have refused all proposals to establish a resort of this nature within their territory. This decision is, undoubtedly, wise for many internal reasons, and externally as the Italian government does not look favourably upon institutions of this character.

To this day the uprightness of the inhabitants can be readily vouched for, and once more it is safe to say that a visit to this curious state, termed some years ago "A Freak of Freedom," will provide the visitor from other lands with abundant interest and pleasure. It will enable him to obtain a glimpse into times and customs that are now lost irretrievably in the other countries of Europe.